



Division of Developmental Disabilities

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The Division of Developmental Disabilities Voluntary Placement/Foster Care Program (VPP)

Birth/Adoptive Parents of Children and Youth With Disabilities Who Are in Out-of-Home Care

Welcome!

The purpose of this brochure is to provide information to the birth/adoptive parents of children and youth with developmental disabilities who are considering out-of-home care. For reasons important to your family and in accord with RCW 74.13.350, based solely on your child's disability, you have requested out-of-home care for your son or daughter. The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) offers the Voluntary Placement/Foster Care Program (VPP).

What is the philosophy of DDD?

The Division of Developmental Disabilities believes that all children deserve to have a family and live in a home. DDD ensures that the living arrangement for your child is licensed; that the caregivers respect your parenting role and that you respect the caregivers as partners in the "shared parenting" role.

What does “voluntary placement” mean?

It means that you retain custody of your child but your child will live in the home of another for the majority of time. Your son or daughter will live in the home of a licensed foster parent, a licensed group facility, a staffed residential home or another arrangement that is appropriate. If your child is under 18 years of age, the DSHS Division of Licensed Resources **must** license the out-of-home arrangement.

What is the difference between emergency placement, respite, and long-term placement?

Emergency placements only occur, (DCFS) when Child Protective Services, Division of Children and Family Services, places a child for safety reasons. When that happens, a family may lose custody of their child. The VPP does not do emergency placements.

DDD does not have the authority to take legal custody of a child.

Respite placement is an arrangement for your child to live elsewhere for a short time so that you may have relief from care. When your child is in the VPP, respite is a service for the foster parents and you may be the respite provider when your child is not living in your home.

Long-term placement is the arrangement that you and the social worker make for your child to live outside of your home for as long as the Voluntary Placement Agreement is in place.

When planning a placement for your child, the DDD social worker considers the fit between the selected provider and your child and family.

Planning for placement takes time. Finding a licensed foster family and an appropriate match between families is the top priority.

What is a Voluntary Placement Agreement?

When there is an agreement between you and the social worker, who is a representative of DSHS, that an out-of-home placement is the best arrangement for your son or daughter, you will sign a “voluntary placement agreement.” You retain custody of your child. At any time, you or DDD can terminate the agreement, because it is a voluntary agreement.

Is there court involvement in my decision to ask for out-of-home placement?

- The law (RCW 74.13.350) states that when children with disabilities, who meet eligibility criteria for DDD services, are placed out-of-home, it must be solely due to the child's disability. This means the impact of your child's disability has caused you to ask for out-of-home placement.
- Parents and representatives of DDD must mutually agree on out-of-home placement as being in the best interest of your child.
- When your child is in a licensed out-of-home placement, the court process begins.
- Within 180 days of placement, the DDD social worker must go to court to inform the court of the mutual decision and the agreement. You are encouraged to attend.
- Each year, the DDD social worker must go to court to confirm that the out-of-home placement is in the best interest of the child.
- You retain custody of your child at all times; this means you are still and ultimately responsible for the welfare of your child.
- The court involvement is a confirmation that the out-of-home placement continues to be in the best interest of your child. The court will not pass judgement, nor deny a placement as long as it is a consensual arrangement between DDD and the birth/adoptive parents and is in the best interest of the child.

What are the roles, rights, and responsibilities of the birth/adoptive parents and guardians?

- Parents retain legal custody of their child.
- Parents retain the right to make all major non-emergency decisions about medical care, enlistment in military service, marriage and other important legal decisions for the person under the age of 18 years.
- Parents maintain ongoing and regular contact with the child (see “shared parenting plan”).
- Parents agree to work cooperatively with DSHS staff and persons caring for their child.
- Parents participate in decision making for their child.
- Parents cooperate with DDD in selecting a representative payee for the child’s SSI/SSA benefits while in out-of-home care.
- If placement is disrupted, it is the responsibility of the parent to take the child back home until a new placement is developed. Your signature on the Voluntary Placement Agreement confirms your understanding of this.
- Parents retain the right to make all major non-emergency decisions.

What are the roles, responsibilities, and rights of foster parents and caregivers

- Licensed foster parents/caregivers may end the placement any time they wish; you as the parent need to know this. They are requested to give 30 days notice to their licensor or social worker, but in fact, they may terminate the arrangement at any time.
- Licensed foster parents/caregivers are entitled to maintain their personal lifestyle as approved through the licensing process. They do not have to change their daily routines and practices in their family to accommodate special requests of your family. In out-of-home placement, children live in someone else’s home. The feelings, lifestyles, schedules and plans of each licensed foster parent/caregiver must be respected.
- Licensed foster parents/caregivers are expected to work cooperatively with birth/adoptive parents. DDD works with everyone to ensure the best interests of the child are always considered.
- Legal parents continue to be recognized by the public school special education program as the responsible party for all educational decisions.

Who pays for this out-of-home placement?

- When your child and family participate in the VPP, you no longer have access to the Family Support Opportunities program, traditional Family Support, Community Guides, or Medicaid Personal Care.
- Your child will receive a Medicaid coupon from the Foster Care Medical Unit; your social worker completes the paperwork for this coupon.
- You will be required to designate a representative payee for your child's SSI benefits while your child lives in a licensed out-of-home arrangement. Your DDD social worker will call the representative payee agency; the agency calls you and initiates the necessary paperwork. Your child cannot go into out-of-home placement until you have selected a new payee and the process for change is implemented. Foster parents and family members of the birth/adoptive family cannot be payees. DDD uses only Social Security Administration-approved representative payees.
- While your child is in foster care, you are sharing parenting with a licensed caregiver. The SSI benefits are used for "room and board." Your licensed caregiver receives a basic rate of reimbursement for cost of care, including a small portion for maintenance, such as clothing and personal incidentals. As the custodial parent, you need to continue to be responsible for such items as back-to-school clothing and any other things you want your child to have. Remember that you are sharing the parenting with another caregiver; you retain custody of your child and continue to have responsibility to provide some clothing, personal items, and other items such as presents that might not be covered under "maintenance items."
- Services in DDD offered within available resources.

What is a "shared parenting" plan?

- The "shared parenting plan" is a written plan, prepared together with the licensed caregiver, social worker and birth/adoptive parent. The purpose of the plan is to identify in writing, who will do what, when, where, under what conditions, and on what timeline. It is intended to be a guide for parents, licensed care providers and the social worker to follow. This comprehensive plan includes what happens with education, social and medical events. The plan is prepared and delivered in a respectful, culturally sensitive and age appropriate manner.
- The plan focuses on the strengths and concerns of the child and the birth/adopted family.
- A licensed care provider participates in supporting the medical care, social/emotional adjustment, and educational needs of the child while in out-of-home care.
- The plan also focuses on the needs of the child, who is going to meet those needs and how; needs are met.
- The plan focuses on the families sharing the parenting and what each family will do in emergencies, planned daily events and vacations.
- The plan is reviewed at least annually or more frequently if issues change.

What Is an Individual Service Plan, and a Home and Community Alternative Placement Waiver (CAP)

- The Individual Service Plan (ISP) is a plan that includes the child's strengths, abilities, needs, and the services offered to support the child. In the VPP, it is sometimes used as a support document in the court approval process. It will be used as a support to the child's Individual Education Plan, (IEP) the plan that is designed by public school special education personnel and family members.
- The Community Alternative Placement (CAP) waiver is a method. Through the CAP waiver, federal matching funds are made available for certain community-based services to eligible persons who are at risk of institutionalization. The VPP is one type of service funded through the waiver. The VPP helps children remain in the community in licensed foster care settings that are less restrictive than institutional care.

What are the steps in the process?

- Your child meets DDD eligibility criteria and may be currently receiving services such as Family Support. Your child has a DDD Case Resource Manager (CRM).
- A parent calls her/his child's DDD case resource manager (CRM) and requests out-of-home placement.
- The case manager discusses and explores with the parent options other than out-of-home placement.
- The case manager discusses the issues with DDD/VPP social worker in the local DDD office.
- There is an agreement reached between the parents and the representative of DDD that out-of-home placement is appropriate and a Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA) is signed.
- At the time you sign the VPA, you are required to select a representative payee for your child. If your child receives SSI or SSA benefits, or if your child is not currently on SSI, then you are requested to apply to Social Security. The SSI benefits contribute toward the cost of room and board while in foster care. Social Security allows this as a legitimate use of benefits. DDD pays for the remainder of cost of care for out-of-home placement from VPP funds allocated by the legislature for this program.
- While you wait for placement, your case resource manager and DDD social worker will locate a licensed placement and consider your needs.

When can a VPA be terminated?

- When a birth/adoptive parent wishes the child to be returned to their home.
- When none of the parties (birth/adoptive parent, licensed caregiver), or DDD is in complete agreement with the out-of-home placement.
- When a placement disrupts and the birth/adoptive parent refuses, is unwilling, or unable to take the child back into their home.
- When a birth/adoptive parent wishes to relinquish rights to their child. When the VPA is terminated; the child's case file is transferred to Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The child remains eligible for DDD services, but DCFS is responsible for the process when a parent considers relinquishment.
- Circumstances under which a parent might have a child returned home include disruption of placement, no mutual agreement, conflicts preclude agreement on issues, reasonably available services, child runs away from home for number of hours longer than specified in the agreement.
- DDD representatives may deny a request for out-of-home placement. RCW 74.13.350 states "if the department does not accept a voluntary placement agreement signed by the parent, a petition may be filed and an action pursued under Chapter 13.34 RCW. The department shall inform the parent, guardian, or legal custodian in writing of their right to civil action under RCW 13.34."

How is medical/school/social information managed while my child is in out-of-home placement?

- You retain legal custody of your child. If you carry your child on your family insurance policy, continue that coverage. Foster care medical coupons are used as a secondary source of medical coverage.
- When your child is in voluntary out-of-home placement your child's medical needs will be covered by medical coupon if private insurance is not in place. The medical coupon is issued to the foster parent out of the Foster Care Medical Unit (FCMU) in Olympia. Your child's social worker makes those arrangements.
- On your child's medical card, there will be a "d" designation that allows for greater coverage for dental care and other care related to the child's disability.
- As the birth/adoptive parent(s) you retain legal custody of your child. Your child is probably in a special education program in the public school. Birth/adoptive parents continue to be notified of the IEP meetings with school staff and parents. School districts are required by law to inform the birth/adoptive parents of any meetings related to your child's special education placement. If you wish the foster parent to attend, you are responsible for informing the licensed care provider of your child about special education meetings, IEP meetings, and other school-related programs that they will be expected to attend on behalf of your child. The school must notify you; you must notify the licensed care provider.

What are the steps in the process? Continued

- After a placement is secured, the DDD social worker, parent, and child will meet together to determine the “fit” of the placement.
- When everyone is satisfied that the out-of-home living arrangement is in the best interest of your child, that you will participate in the shared parenting plan, and all pieces of this arrangement have been put into place, then your child will be transported to the new home. The shared parenting plan begins.
- How your child is transported to the new home depends on what you and your social worker decide works best for your child, your family, and the provider. You are encouraged to participate and go with your social worker or drive your child to the licensed care arrangement along with your social worker. Your child’s social worker may transport your child or you may transport your child to the new home.

When Can A VPA Be Terminated? Continued

- The birth/adoptive parent has the right to file a petition with the Clerk of Superior Court to pursue juvenile dependency options according to RCW 13.34.040.
- After placement is terminated by either birth/adoptive parent or DDD, your child returns home. The child no longer has a social worker. The child returns to the caseload of a case resource manager. The birth/adoptive parents may apply to be their child’s representative payee when the child is living in their home once again.
- If your child continues to be DDD eligible, you then work with your case resource manager to decide services available for which your child is eligible.

How is medical/school/social information managed? Continued

- When your child is in out-of-home care, your child might have to change schools. You must be prepared for this event, even if it doesn’t occur. Special education records will follow your child to a new school. Your licensed care provider needs your assistance if your child enters a new school. You still have all the information.
- Your child continues to participate in the special education program in which he/she participates when going into out-of-home placement. Your child is entitled to a free and appropriate public school education. You are the legal parent. You are expected to notify the foster parent, provider or any other person you wish to participate in your child’s Individual Education Plan. You must continue to be involved in your child’s special education programming.
- Every effort is made to retain/maintain sports, or other activities in which your child participated when living full-time in your home.



“Is there anything I forgot to ask about the VPP?”

Notes

Important Phone Numbers

Other

<div>Social Worker</div> <div>()</div>	<div></div> <div>()</div>	<div></div> <div>()</div>
<div>Foster Parent(s)</div> <div>()</div>	<div></div> <div>()</div>	<div></div> <div>()</div>
<div>Doctor</div> <div>()</div>	<div></div> <div>()</div>	<div></div> <div>()</div>
<div>Dentist</div> <div>()</div>	<div></div> <div>()</div>	<div></div> <div>()</div>